Issues Reduction Task Force
Draft Outline of Potential Strategies
April 12, 2013 Revised 4/17/13

Purpose

As a part of the College Park Neighborhood Stabilization and Quality of Life Work Group, the Issues Reduction Task Force worked over the past several months to develop a number of potential strategies for addressing quality of life issues that are sometimes associated with rental housing in College Park, such as noise, loud parties, vandalism, trash, public urination, and excessive alcohol consumption.

There is a broad and general recognition that a new course of action is required by all stakeholders to address the community's concerns and that the status quo is unacceptable. This document provides a draft preliminary outline of potential strategies that could be adopted and implemented by various stakeholders such as the City of College Park, University of Maryland, police agencies, student groups such as the Student Government Association and Inter-Fraternity Council, landlord organizations, and others. Representatives of these stakeholders participated in the Task Force's work to develop this list of potential strategies, and the list also incorporates ideas raised during public testimony at the public forum held on January 29, 2013. Members of the public are invited to provide input on these potential strategies at the next public forum to be held on April 30, 2013.

It is important to note that these are not "recommendations" of the committee – not all task force members support all of the proposed strategies, and the committee was asked to compile all of the suggestions and not to eliminate any from consideration at this time. There are various challenges to each suggested strategy, and the Task Force's final report will discuss pros and cons as well as challenges for each strategy.

The Work of the Task Force

At the Task Force's first meeting, the group developed the following principles to guide their work:
- Solution-oriented
- Effective – short term and long term
- Balanced with an emphasis on incentives versus punishment
- Open minded with all stakeholders in mind (think outside the box)
- Instills pride in College Park

Task Force members identified the following issues as the most pressing:
- Noise
- House parties
- Tailgate parties
- Vandalism
- Public urination
- Trash in yards & toters left at curb
- Overcrowding
- Public safety/crime
- Excessive alcohol consumption
- Home/yard/sidewalk maintenance
- Vehicle issues and improper parking

To comprehensively confront and address these concerns, the Task Force felt that there needed to be clear standards that all stakeholders (residents, UMCP Administration, UMCP Police, Prince George's County Police, City of College Park, students, and rental property owners) would agree on, as well as policies and procedures that would help to reinforce those standards. There is a general recognition that prevention and education are more effective, less costly, and help to create a better community (i.e. instilling pride in College Park) than enforcement. However, changes to code enforcement strategies are also necessary and critical to the success in addressing these concerns.

The Task Force notes that a number of current actions are already progressing that have the potential to make meaningful progress. The two most notable are the continued action from the University of Maryland Administration to consider expanding the Student Code of Conduct to include off-campus behavior. We understand that this process is likely to be completed by the end of the spring 2013 semester. In addition, greater coordination now exists between the City Code Enforcement, Prince George's County Police and the University Police to manage gatherings particularly around athletic events. The organization of the large bonfire after the UM vs. Duke game and the resulting minimal level of disruptions is an example of their success and hard work. The Task Force discussed how these new and coordinated approaches could be a model to handle other disruptive times of the year when large parties and noise peak (i.e., weekends in the early fall and when the weather improves in the spring).

Listing of Goals and Potential Strategies

Below we provide a brief outline of each goal and corresponding strategies, as well as a list of the stakeholders needed to take action under each strategy.

Goal: Establish Consistent Expectation and Enforcement

1. Action: Extend Code of Student Conduct (CSC) off-campus
   - Require students to adhere to the same standards off campus as they do on campus.
   - Increase enforcement and communication between UMCP Police, City (code enforcement, contract police, Noise Board), and IFC/SGA groups for referral system.

   Stakeholders: UMD, UMPD, City (Code Enforcement, Contract Police, Noise Board)

Goal: Increase Code Enforcement Effectiveness

2. Action: Change Allocation of Enforcement Methodologies & Resources:
   - Hire dedicated, part-time, contract noise enforcement staff to work during evenings and weekends, either by reallocating funds from the City's contract police program or through new funding. (Currently, noise enforcement is staffed by full-time code enforcement officers who often work overtime to meet demands during peak noise-related/party evening and weekends.)
   - Ask Code Enforcement to use C-MAST (City Multi-Agency Services Team) data to identify appropriate times to staff contract noise enforcement (they do this currently with their own data).
   - Alter procedures for issuing citations:
     - If enforcement agent is not easily able to determine tenant names, agents should issue fines in the name of the landlord and post on the door as well as notify landlord through City electronic notification system. (If property owner is accredited, property owner

would be required to contact tenant's parents). *[Note: City Code Enforcement has begun implementing this strategy.]*

- o Permit Code Enforcement Officers to take noise readings from the safety of their vehicle without the presence of a police officer (unless they feel they are in danger).
- Continue working with new IFC/SGA mechanism for peer-to-peer noise and code enforcement, as recommended by the Community Building Task Force.

Stakeholders: City, students/tenants, rental property owners, residents

3. Utilize Nuisance Abatement strategies, when necessary, to address flagrant and chronic properties.

Stakeholders: City, residents

4. Alter Noise Control Board Governance and Composition
   - Require Noise Board to refer violations to both the UMCP Office of Student Affairs (as part of the Code of Student Conduct) and to the new student organized (IFC/SGA) to provide education and additional sanctions (such as community service).
   - If a noise violation has been found to occur, the maximum fine reduction that the Board should be permitted to grant should be no more than ½ of the fine (for first-time offenses only).
   - Add community service as an additional sanction to fines.
   - Require Board to refer offending group to Community Oriented Policing (COPS program) after each offense.
   - Lower decibel limits for noise violation thresholds.
   - Keep noise decibel limits at their current levels.
   - Add a student representative to the Noise Board.

Stakeholders: City, UMD, students

5. Install surveillance cameras in key areas & work with the City Multi-Agency Services Team (C-MAST) on targeted problem areas.
6. Educate community about how to report problems.
7. Develop an ongoing Issues Reduction Task Force to meet 4 times per year to develop, test, and evaluate progress on programs and newly instituted changes.

Stakeholders: City (Council, Contract Police), UMPD, rental property owners

Goal: Establish Clear Expectations from Rental Property Owners and Develop Best Practices

8. Develop an accreditation program for rental properties and property owners/managers. Accreditation will indicate that property meets specific standards and that the property owner commits to certain actions that will address core quality of life issues in the neighborhood.

Potential requirements for accreditation include a property owner's commitment to:

- Include the following standard lease language:
  - o Noise deposit or language tied to the security deposit to be forfeited in the event of a noise violation.

- o No outside gatherings of 20 or more people.
- o No firearms.
- Provide tenants & parents with noise and behavior expectations.
- Commit to contact tenants & parents if party/noise violation occurs.
- Participate in listserv that notifies members of problem rental houses.
- Attest that adjoining property owners have updated contact information for rental property owner or local agent/property manager.
- Facilitate a bi-annual (every other year) inspection from Police and Fire authorities to ensure that home meets high safety standards (lighting, locks, etc.).
- Have a general willingness to be notified when problems arise (at all hours of day or night).
- Pass a rental property owner test to ensure knowledge of laws, requirements.
- Require tenants to view and pass test regarding understand expectation and rules for living in College Park.
- Maintain responsibility for lawn care/yard upkeep.
- Meet life safety standards and consider a tiered approach to accreditation such as:
  - o GOLD includes compliance with codes for new properties including residential fire sprinkler system, current code compliant smoke alarm system, and compliance with City and County codes for new construction.
  - o SILVER includes current new code compliant smoke alarm system and compliance with City and County codes for existing properties for era property was built.
  - o BRONZE includes compliance with City and County codes for existing properties for era house was built.
- Comply with City ordinance to provide names of residents when requested for code enforcement.

Other ideas and comments related to this proposed accreditation program include the following:

- Create a clearinghouse for complaints against rental property owners and attempt to solve problems that are reported.
- Inform about the Accreditation program during the rental license renewal process.
- Provide incentives such as requiring rental inspections every other year for rental property owners that join the Accreditation program.
- Avoid providing any City benefits that are not directly administered by the City. Do not require that rental property owners to join, support, participate in, or seek approval from any private association as a condition for their entitlement to full benefits under the program.

Stakeholders: Rental Property Owners

9. Upgrade/Modify Rental License Renewal Process
Potential measures include:
- Require property owners or agent/manager to be within 75-mile radius of College Park. (Current permitting process only requires a local agent, not manager, to receive notices; the local agent does not have to address any problems that may arise at the property.)

- Require property owner (or agent) to participate in annual orientation, in order to receive rental license/permit, that has the follow elements:
  - Enrollment in electronic notification system with name of person with relevant contact information.
  - Explanation by code enforcement with a focus on new and enhanced expectations.
  - Mandated viewing of a video to highlight the challenges the community faces renting to the student population and outline best practices.
- Streamline the licensing process by doing the following:
  - Automate rental license renewal process, to free up City staff to focus on issues reduction.
  - Provide one rental registration deadline for ALL rental properties (early in the year) when the permit fee is paid and all paperwork is completed. Inspection occurs throughout the year (as it is done now).
  - Offer orientation program on 3 different dates around the registration deadline. All stakeholders (University, Policy, Fire, Resident, IFC, SGA, PGPOA, etc.) could be invited to participate.

Stakeholders: City, rental property owners

Goal: Educate New and Existing Community Members about Neighborhood Expectations

10. Facilitate neighbor "Meet & Greet" events similar to those currently hosted by the CHUM student co-op housing group.
11. Expand "Walk & Talk" program, amulti-agency task force to visit student rental households.
    - Program was originally designed to address "problem" houses – suggestion is to expand this program in order to educate more student rental households at the beginning of the academic year.
    - Coordinate with IFC/SGA new block leaders program (strategy coming from the Community Relations Task Force).

Stakeholders: UMD, City, students, rental property owners

Goal: Change Incentives in Order to Redirect Parties from Residential Neighborhoods to Other Areas

12. Explore University sponsorship of entertainment for students (to provide alternatives to partying in neighborhoods)
13. Through a City permitting process, allow for tailgating at designated locations such as the Book Exchange and City municipal parking lot. Provide posted start and end times/dates.
14. Relax noise enforcement on selected University home game days (to focus parties on certain dates)
15. Implement a party registration program based on best practices from other peer institutions.
16. Study best practices at other peer institutions for addressing other student/community related issues.
17. Reconsider policies relating to parties and alcohol consumption on campus and in fraternities/sororities.

Stakeholders: UMD, City, students (including IFC and SGA), UMPD

Goal: Enhance City Street Safety and Cleanliness

18. Increase number of trash cans/recycling bins on public streets (painted turtles).
19. Increase the use of speed reduction instruments in high pedestrian area such as planters to change the width of the road, greater use of raised sidewalks and lower the speed limit.

    Stakeholders: City, UMD, students